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ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1982, the Atlanta Public Schools sponsored four instructional television programs. The courses were designed to provide remedial instruction in reading and mathematics for target first, second, and ninth grade students. Questionnaires were administered to determine the success of the telecourses based upon the extent to which students watched the programs and the general reactions of students, parents, and teachers. For ninth graders who registered for the reading and mathematics telecourses, a pretest and posttest were also administered to determine whether there was an observable improvement in their skills at the end of the summer. An analysis of the data indicates that the programs were well received by those who responded. However, an overall assessment of the telecourses' success was hampered by the following data collection problems: (1) only 14 percent return of parental questionnaires, (2) test information submitted for non-registered students made it difficult to identify the sample of students to be studied, (3) high attrition rate of students who were posttested, and (4) due to a revision of the mathematics posttest, no comparison could be made regarding students' performance in the mathematics pretest and posttest. (PN)

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EVALUATION OF SUMMER INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMS 1982

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EVALUATION OF SUMMER INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMS 1982

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EVALUATION OF SUMMER INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMS 1982

INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1982, the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) sponsored four instructional television programs which were broadcasted via WETV-Channel 30. The television courses were designed to provide remedial instruction for target first, second, and ninth grade students. The following six telecourses were aired for a six-week period extending from June 21, 1982, to July 30, 1982:

Grade	Reading	Mathematics
1	Space Readers (Level I)	The Math Cart
2	Space Readers (Level II)	Number Street
9	Study Skills	Math Wise

The four elementary programs were produced locally using APS and WETV personnel, while the two high school programs were purchased from outside the system. The six telecourses also differed in terms of the number of new lessons presented each week and the length of each show, as indicated below:

Show	Length	No. of New Lessons Per Week	No. of Times Shown Per Lesson
Space Readers (Level I)	15 minutes	5	3
The Math Cart	15 minutes	5	3
Space Readers (Level II)	15 minutes	5	3
Number Street	15 minutes	5	3
Study Skills	20 minutes	1	4
Math Wise	15 minutes	2	4

As suggested by the above outline, first and second grade students were shown a new lesson each day which was broadcasted in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The ninth graders were shown one new reading lesson and two new mathematics lessons per week. To maximize opportunities for viewing, the shows were repeated throughout the week in the mornings and afternoons.

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the success of the telecourses based upon the extent to which students watched the programs and the general reactions of students, parents, and teachers to them. For ninth graders who registered for the reading and mathematics telecourses, a pretest and posttest were also administered to determine whether there was an observable improvement in their skills at the end of the summer.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

To obtain a cross-section of responses, questionnaires were either sent or administered to the following groups:

1. Parents of first and second graders who attended summer school. (Questionnaires were sent home with students.)

2. Parents of first and second graders who were administratively placed or who were retainees but did not attend the summer program. (Questionnaires were sent by mail with self-addressed, return envelope enclosed.)

3. Elementary teachers who taught the first and second grade retainees during the summer of 1982. (Questionnaires were sent by school mail.)

4. Ninth grade students enrolled in the summer television courses. (Student questionnaires, as well as reading and math posttests were administered on the Celebration of Learning Day — August 27, 1982 — to ninth grade participants who reported to the schools. The remaining participants were asked to complete only the student questionnaires during the first week of school, i.e., August 30, 1982 — September 3, 1982.)

FINDINGS

Ninth Grade Results

Approximately 328 ninth graders registered for the 1982 television courses based upon the official roster disseminated to schools. Of that number, 75 percent of the students enrolled in both television courses, 15 percent enrolled in the reading course only, (i.e., Study Skills) and 9 percent enrolled in the mathematics course only (i.e., Math Wise). However, there were numerous disrepancies in the data submitted.

Thirteen of the 22 high schools officially registered students for the summer television courses in accordance with regular summer school procedures. Course numbers were provided for both the reading and mathematics telecourses. The students were to register for these courses just as they would for any other summer course. The schools listed below followed this process and were considered official participants in the program:

Area I	Area II	Area III
Brown	Bass	Archer
Douglass	East Atlanta	Grady
Harper	Fulton	Washington
Therrell	George	West Fulton
	Murphy	

There were four schools from Area I, five from Area II, and four from Area III. All schools had some students who registered for the reading or mathematics television courses, with the exception of Fulton High School. Students at Fulton enrolled in the reading telecourse only.

In addition to these schools, they were four schools which were "unofficial" participants. These schools had no students enrolled in either television course under the course numbers designated. They, nevertheless, submitted either pretest data or both pretest and posttest information. The following schools fell into this category:

Area I	Area II	Area III
Mays	Carver	Northside
Turner		

Of the unofficially participating schools, only Carver was included in the data analysis. Carver submitted pretests for 29 students in reading and for 25 students in math. They also submitted 29 student questionnaires. The other three schools submitted pretest data only for five students or less. However, unlike Carver, there was no other evidence of their participation.

In general, there were numerous discrepancies in the data sumitted. Therefore, the findings reported are based primarily upon the responses of 97 students who completed the student questionnaire and 58 students having matched reading pretests and posttests. Additional responses were also obtained from 93 students who acknowledged that they did not complete the telecourse for which they had registered.

It was not possible to analyze the mathematics pretests and posttests because the items on the two tests were not the same. There was, therefore, no way to determine if a change in performance was due to an improvement in math skills or to differences in the difficulty level of the pretest and posttest.

Responses to Student Questionnaire:

The following results were obtained from the responses of the 97 ninth graders who participated in the summer television courses and completed student questionnaires:

— In contrast to the official roster of students enrolled in the project, 65 percent of those who responded indicated that they registered for the reading and math television courses; 26 percent indicated that they were enrolled in the math telecourse only, while 9 percent indicated that they were enrolled in the reading telecourse only. (According to the original roster, 75 percent of the students were enrolled in both telecourses, 15 percent in the reading course only, and 9 percent in the math course only.)

— Most students reported viewing the program(s) from once to three times percent week. Twenty-six percent of the ninth graders responding indicated that they viewed the program(s) three times per week, 24 percent reported viewing twice per week, while 22 percent reported viewing once per week.

— The majority of the students (41 percent) viewed the programs in the afternoon; 31 percent reported viewing the shows in the morning, and 22 percent indicated that they watched the programs both morning and afternoon.

The students responded similarly to the reading and mathematics television courses in several instances which are summarized below: (Percentages are reported only for selected categories.)

— A majority of the students responding (i.e., 66 percent for Study Skills and 59 percent for Math Wise) indicated that the lessons presented on the television courses were "just right."

— The students reported that they either received assistance from their parents or from other family members in completing the follow-up activities, or they received no assistance at all. Few students received assistance from local school personnel, the CARE Line, or the librarian at a public library as shown on the following page:

	Percent Assistance Received	
	Study Skills	Math Wise
Parents/family members	26	27
Persons at school	12	14
CARE Line	4	4
Public Librarian	7	1
No Assistance	31	31

— A majority of the ninth graders responding indicated that they enjoyed watching the television courses (i.e, 56 percent for Study Skills and 58 percent for Math Wise). Eighteen percent of the students reported, that they neither liked nor disliked the programs, which was the second most frequently given response.

— Watching the television programs, doing the Student Worksheet activities, and working independently without having to go to summer school were the preferred components of both television courses as indicated below:

	Percent Most Preferred	
Course Component	Study Skills	Math Wise
Television programs	27	29
Student Worksheet activities	18	21
Working independently	26	20
Three follow-up activities	10	11

— It was somewhat difficult to determine the least preferred component(s) of the television courses. In contrast to the responses given regarding the most preferred feature of the television courses, students indicated that either none of the options offered on the questionnaire were the least preferred or they placed the Student Worksheet activities in this category in contrast to their earlier responses. However, it's difficult to determine what their responses mean in this instance. The students may have been confused by the manner in which the item was phrased. A listing of the responses follows:

	Percent Least Preferred	
Course Component	Study Skills	Math Wise
Television programs	18	20
Student Worksheet activities	21	21
Working independently	6	7
Three follow-up activities	12	9
None of the above	33	34

— Most students responding indicated that they believed both television courses would be appealing to other high school students. Only 17 percent of the students who viewed Math Wise and 15 percent of the students who viewed Study Skills indicated that they believed the programs would be appealing to few if any high school students.

— A majority of the students responding indicated that television courses like Math Wise(M) and Study Skills (SS) should be offered during the regular school year. A majority also indicated that they would register for other summer television courses if offered, and they believed that the telecourse activities which they completed would help to improve their general test-taking skills as shown below.

	Percent in Agreement					
	Yes		No		Not Sure	
Topic	M	SS	M	SS	M	SS
Should telecourses be available during the regular school year?	55	62	6	3	23	18
Would you take another telecourse?	56	55	8	4	20	24
Did telecourse activities help to improve your general test-taking skills?	57	61	5	10	25	15

There were only three instances in which the students' reactions to the two television courses differed. They related to students' success in understanding the lessons presented, completing the Student Worksheet activities, and acquiring more help in completing assignments. Students who viewed Math Wise most frequently responded that they only sometimes understood the lessons presented and generally needed more help with the telecourses. The most frequent response given by students who viewed Study Skills was that they understood the lessons presented most of the times and did not need additional help with the telecourse.

Students' reactions to these two items, however, were not unanimous. For example, 41 percent of those viewing Math Wise indicated that they did not need additional help, and 23 percent were unsure whether they needed help or not. For Study Skills, 31 percent of the students indicated that they needed additional assistance, 35 percent responded that they did not need further assistance and 15 percent were not sure whether or not they needed additional assistance with the telecourse. Other responses appear below:

	Percent Responding					
	Always		Most Times		Sometimes	
Topic	M	SS	M	SS	M	SS
Understood lessons presented.	10	22	33	31	41	28
Could successfully complete Student Worksheet.	7	21	38	23	30	26

In addition to the 97 students who viewed the television courses and completed the student questionnaire, responses were also obtained from 93 students who acknowledged that they stopped viewing the programs and did not return to take either the reading or mathematics posttests. This latter group of students were asked to complete only one item on the student questionnaire regarding why they did not complete the television course(s) for which they registered. Of the 93 ninth graders in this group, most indicated that they stopped viewing the television courses because they were working (33 percent) or simply forgot to watch the programs (22 percent). Ten percent of the students responded that they got bored; 3 percent reported stopping because no course credit was given; 11 percent mentioned various other conflicts in their schedules, such as being out of town, going to football practice, etc., and twenty percent of the students did not respond to this item.

Of the 97 students who completed the entire questionnaire, there were 45 who, also responded to the item regarding reasons for not completing the television courses. The primary reason given by this group as well was that they failed to complete the television courses because they were working when the programs were broadcasted. Forty-nine percent of the 45 students who responded to this item (or 23 percent of the total sample of 97 students) fell into this category.

Ninth Grade Reading Pretest/Posttest Results:

Of the 77 ninth graders who registered for the Study Skills telecourse and who took the reading posttests, there were 58 students who also had matching pretest scores. The reading pretest/posttest consisted of 30 items. The pretest mean for these students was 18.1; the posttest mean was 18.9. The difference does not reflect a noticeable change in test performance.

First and Second Grade Results

The responses of parents and teachers of first and second grade students were used to determine the success of the elementary television courses. These results were disseminated earlier and are summarized below with additional findings:

Parent Sample:

1. Responses were obtained from 76 parents.

2. Over half of the parents who responded (58 percent) indicated that their children watched one or more of the shows.

3. Of the parents with children who viewed the programs, about 80 percent indicated that their children enjoyed watching the programs; and about 73 percent believed that the programs were beneficial in helping their children to improve their skills in reading and mathematics, as well as their general attitude towards learning.

4. When parents were asked about the assistance received in providing follow-up activities to the telecourse lessons presented, 40 percent of the parents who indicated that their children viewed the instructional programs reported that they used follow-up activities sent home by their child's summer school teacher; 25 percent reported that they continued to use follow-up activities which had been sent home during the regular school year, while 19 percent noted that they had not received any APS follow-up activities which could be used at home. In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that almost two-thirds of the parents responding had children attending summer school.

5. Seventy-five percent of the parents who reported that their children viewed the elementary television courses also indicated that they periodically viewed the programs with their child(ren) as well.

Teacher Sample:

1. Responses were obtained from 80 elementary teachers.

2. Of the elementary summer school teachers who responded, 98 percent were aware of the APS television programs, and 78 percent had an opportunity to view at least one of the shows.

3. Of the teachers who viewed the shows, 66 percent believed the shows presented the minimum skills in a clear and understandable manner, while 27 percent believed that some of the skills were presented clearly and some were not.

4. Approximately 81 percent of the elementary teachers who viewed the summer programs considered them to be an effective means of presenting the minimum skills.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the television courses indicates that the programs were well received by those who responded. However, an overall assessment of the telecourses' success was hampered by the following data collection problems:

1. Parent questionnaires were received from only 26 of the 286 parents of either administratively placed or retained students who did not attend summer school, and from only 50 of the 262 parents of elementary students attending summer school. Thus, the parent data reported represents only 14 percent of the total population of parents of retained or administratively placed students for 1982.

2. There seemed to have been some confusion among high school personnel regarding the procedures to be followed in registering ninth graders for the summer television courses. As a result, it was difficult to identify the sample of students to be studied, since test information was submitted for students who were not registered for the telecourses.

3. There was a high attrition rate in the number of students who reported for posttesting, possibly because the posttesting date occurred before the official opening of school. As a result, it was difficult to acquire a sufficient sample of students having both pretest and posttest data.

4. To facilitate data processing, the mathematics posttest was revised. However, as a result, the pretest and posttest were no longer parallel. Thus, no comparison could be made regarding students' performance in the mathematics pretest and posttest.

Alternatives for improving the quality of the data received should receive careful attention.